THE AMERICAN DECADE

The American Century has shrunk to a decade. A new and better sort of American century may follow its demise. The world sincerely hopes so.

Mme. Sun Yat Sen, writing in the Nation, says that the vast majority of her countrymen "do not believe the American people will allow their reason and courage to be submerged as those of the Germans and Japanese once were."

In comparing the moral challenge facing us today with that which faced the Germans and Japanese yesterday and in the face of which they were unable to retain their integrity as human beings Mme. Sun touches us on our sorest spot.

Perhaps the tide is beginning to turn now, but during the decade, 1945-1955, we have scarcely merited her trust. For if our leaders had had their way (and we never opposed them effectively) we would long ere this have blundered into a catastrophe much the same as that blundered into by the Germans under Hitler. The same forces have operated here as there. True, the population medium through which they operated has been quite different, not only in tradition but in circumstance. Our people have been largely apathetic to the fascist catchcries. Both nationalist dreams of world leadership and anti-communist slogans, while going over big among a conditioned minority, have fallen flat on the ears of the great majority. This majority can, however, only assume a negative merit. They have never shown sufficient affirmative hostility to their misleaders to throw them out. They just made it plain that they didn't want to be disturbed in their daily pleasures by war, however "glorious". And, too, the war which was handed to them (Korea) was such a dud, from every point of view, that the climate has not been favorable for another such venture.

And these forces controlling our national policies, unable to infect the American people with war fever, have likewise been unsuccessful in fulfilling the self-assumed role of world leader. They have tried very hard but definitely not succeeded. All over the world, in Korea, in Viet Nam, in Formosa, in Western Europe, they are regarded as anything but leaders. What they have succeeded in doing has been to identify themselves thoroughly with the cause of world reaction.

They very much want to settle German re-unification on their own terms. They want a united Germany, armed to the teeth with atomic weapons, lined up on their side of the cold war. But it is Germany that is divided, and it is Germany, the divided parts of which will have to meet and talk and make up their quarrels. The USA cannot force Germany to re-unite. In fact, by trying to do so the USA could well make the division permanent.

Empires seldom, if ever, grow by taking thought. That is, the imperial powers of history, Egypt, Rome, Britain, didn't say: come now, let's build an empire! At later stages there was planning of course, to hold the thing together, but the beginnings were largely accidents. And this difference sticks out like a sore thumb about the American Empire. It has been over planned and badly planned and so none of its plans pan out.

One reason for this is that the interests seeking the protection of this new America are composed of the veritable garbage of history, all those elements supposed to have been discarded after the French and American revolutions, feudal barons dressed in modern clothes, obscurantist bishops with patched-up theologies, generals in- and out-of-uniform with new salutes and slogans, trying to push themselves into the picture in front of the cartel money octopus, which is delighted to have them hide his unlovely countenance.

Little by Little:

The actors in this tragic farce are a hair-raising crew, throwbacks and deviates, a devout little fat sadist general Franco, an ascetic lay-monk Salazar, a rose-loving scholar, his face a parchment nightmare, Rhee, the "peanut" Gimo, the theological lawyer Dulles, and the rest.

The cement holding them together is hate, hate for communism fused with hate for democracy, both viewed by these "Christians" (for they are all devout "Christians") as the spawn of that Reformation which broke the Christian Unity of the Middle Ages, the Great Age of European history.

That is why the cartel lawyer Dulles finds it necessary constantly to pump hate into the naive and easy-going President, lest his hail-fellow-well-met quality might loosen the cement. As we write (end of August) this hate-priming is going on in the Eisenhower, Dulles, and Nixon policy speeches.

But the decade of mastery is over, although some apparently haven't noticed it, and it was an illusion anyway, even while it lasted. For America and her allies never had the preponderant power they thought they had, and Russia let them think they had. It was political Judo to let them spread themselves, using their own strength to weaken them.

But when Mao swept MacArthur off his doorstep at the Yalu and held him off, it was not hard for an outsider to see that the relative strength, military and moral, as between the USA and China, had undergone a complete change.

And gradually, little by little, the idea took form and hardened in the inward parts of those among the American and Western soldiers who were accustomed to facing facts, the conviction that it was just too much to expect that young Americans should be eager to leave their good lives in the States and travel 7000 miles to fight Chinese who were defending their homes. The only substitute of course would be push-button warfare of various kinds, bacterial or atomic, and this they didn't like to discuss, being war on civilians, because it made them feel ashamed of themselves. But even this answer lasted less than a decade and faded away with the breaking of the atomic monopoly.

What is the upshot of all this? It is simply that to talk, as the President and Dulles and Nixon are talking, to the effect that we are in a position to drive a hard bargain with the Russians just because they are very anxious for peace, is fol-de-rol. Of course it may all be for home consumption, to make us think they really plan to push the reds around in grand style.

But the people are not that foolish or that much misinformed. It is high time to air the secret that everyone knows: King Mars is naked. Nobody can push anybody around any more. At least not in the arena of atomic warfare. Colonial revolts there will be, and internal struggles, but the big bang-bangs are over.

REPRESSION BY FOUNDATION

As an example of the methods and the ethics used on one side of the internal struggle we might cite the following:

The Ford Foundation (Fund for the Republic) has started to "investigate" this little paper. Such a little paper! Why should this tremendously wealthy foundation bother to notice it? Well, it doesn't take more than a tiny match to light up a large cave, and for those who operate in the dark and by the dark, it is necessary to blow out even the merest glimmer.

The agent they are hiring to do the job is the same one who wrote "Apostles of Discord". He is now writing letters to those

connected with us in an editorial or advisory capacity, a sort of questionnaire asking (1) how come they joined us and (2) how come they separated, that is, if they did separate.

Leading up to these questions he says that no doubt the recipient of his letter recalls the charges that have been "levelled at" this paper. He doesn't repeat the lies he told in his book, but just mentions in a general way the "charges", without indicating what the "charges" were. Here he wants to convey an attitude of fairness if possible. He is the scholar, objective. In the book he says we "boasted" of this and that, we "claimed 100,000 readers;" we were "bitterly anti-Catholic." We were a"pro-communist periodical", a "tool of Kremlin policy." Even gossip about the editor carrying a St. Theresa medal was repeated. A passage was quoted from the Dec. 1938 issue, a passage which is very noticeable in that issue by its absence.

Now if this person had wished to seem objective he would have prefaced his questionnaire with the statement that the magazine in question had been both criticized and praised. The present investigation would then be to find out who were right, the adverse critics or the approvers. As it is, he is stupid and doesn't even succeed in seeming objective. He is naïve without being childlike, a strange choice on the part of the Foundation.

Here is one of the answers to his questionnaire:

"When I consider the weighted, distorted, malicious and completely unscholarly section of "Apostles of Discord" dealing with me, as well as the unexcusable treatment of several of the Protestant leaders I most revere in the same book, I am at a loss to find any reason for answering your questionnaire on "The Protestant."

"Less personally, I find it repugnant to appear to cooperate in a study which seems grounded on the same presuppositions which have animated the Un-American Committee in its questioning of religious leaders in recent years, and in the 'reports' it has issued — incidentally in flagrant violation of the First Amendment. Since I resisted and denounced the Un-American Committee with considerable energy, I cannot summon any enthusiasm for cooperating with a private agency which seems to start with the same medieval assumptions. Even if the results of your proposed study were to 'correct' the grosser errors about religion propagated by witch-hunters, the same result can be far better achieved and is now being achieved, by the awakening conscience of millions of Americans, and the increasing vigor with which organized Protestantism is defending the social gospel. By the time your project is completed, the need for refuting Messrs. Jenner, Velde, etc. will have passed.

"As to "The Protestant," I left its Advisory Board for personal reasons none of which are anyone's business but mine and Mr. Leslie's. He edited a religious publication of great importance and value to the American people. I was proud to be associated with it, even while sometimes sharply disagreeing with it. Anyone who cherishes the ideal of American freedom of the press should be everlastingly grateful to Kenneth Leslie for his courage and independence of mind, and the material he presented over the years in "The Protestant." It is a tragic sign of what Lewis Mumford calls 'organized Calibanism' that such a devoted Christian editor should have been so smeared, hounded and traduced by men who also call themselves Christians.

"I am disturbed that so valuable an agency as the Fund for the Republic should engage its resources on an enterprise which is at best futile, and at worst has somewhat sinister overtones, particularly

when one has as much reason as I do to question the scholarship and objectivity of the researcher. But I remember the Fund's million dollar grant for a Buddhist library in the Union of Burma and take heart. This latter enterprise will long be remembered when your excavations into 'The Protestant' have long been forgotten as the nonsense they are."

Sincerely

(signed) Stephen H. Fritchman.

Mr. Fritchman is one of the leading Unitarian ministers on this continent, pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles. It is not long since he was haled before the Un-American Committee and gave them a short course in Americanism. The America of Theodore Parker lives on in Stephen Fritchman.

The address of the agent is: Ralph Lord Roy
The Fund for the Republic, Inc.,
225 West 108th Street, New York 25.

DYSON CARTER'S NEW BOOK

Dyson Carter's latest novel "Fatherless Sons" adds much to the debt we owe him as, in the capacity of scientist, editor, traveller, and literary artist, he labors to convey to his fellow Canadians his vision of the truth of life, both here and abroad.

This story lays bare both the tragic futility and the heroic grandeur too of life in one of our great hard-rock mining and processing communities. He tells the tale of three generations of a Canadian mining family, sacrificed in war, both in the field as soldiers and in the mine, in the rush for metal to feed war. The story is gripping from outset to finish and there is no mawkish let-down in the depiction of the system of life which drives warped humans to torture and murder their fellow beings in their insane appetite for power and money.

Dyson Carter is one of Canada's finest assets.

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LOVE SEEKS HIS BONDAGE

Love seeks his bondage, nor can life be found
Where love with earth is not forever bound.
The grass cut down may guess why Jesus died,
The hooked fish may portend the Crucified.
We must ascend where dwell the lost and lowly
To find the single-heart, the pure, the holy;
There shall a common buttercup be best
To tell the golden-hearted from the rest,
There shall a blade of grass be sword of steel
Dividing those who hurt from those who heal,
There what seemed lost is found and satisfied
To find a need its worth, a cross its pride.
The soul is nothing you can lay away
In lavender against a wedding day.
The soul is more than breath, it is a seed,
The human heart its garden and its need.
It must go out and drench itself in rain,
Girdle itself with ground, it must know pain,
It must be trapped before it can be free
To flame like a rose or stand up like a tree.

K.L.

WHAT HAS CHRISTIANITY TO DO WITH COMMUNISM?

There can be no doubt, if we believe the New Testament, that the original gatherings of the disciples of Jesus were communistic. Koinonia was the word they used: fellowship.

But it was something tougher and tenderer than what is meant by fellowship today. The spirit of unity that bound it together was a cement resistant to all solvents. It was the fellowship of a spirit that mattered. In the communal sharing of food, clothing and shelter, it mattered so much that any member who held out on the fellowship even a part of his personal wealth was liable to drastic and sudden punishment. As we read the story of Ananias and Sapphira in the fifth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we are amazed at the power of this inner compulsion to share. And our amazement is a measure of how far we have been removed from the spirit of those apostles.

The terrible intensity of this story surely means that the spirit which caught these fellowships in its passion was a spirit of such unifying effect that those it possessed could not conceive of any member being unwilling to share his all with the others.

The spirit of the early Christians was the spirit of communism.

Now it is one of our customs to explain this away by calling it an interim way of life, a way of life entered into because of a belief that Jesus would return any day to install his kingdom, a way of life therefore that was not meant for the long pull through the centuries.

But this explains nothing away. For Jesus is always coming, just as Jesus is always here. And the spirit of Jesus is the same spirit that made communism mandatory among his first followers.

We can do one of two things:
(1) We can throw out the spirit of Jesus that matters.
(2) We can hold fast to it.

The history of the churches which gained the respect of the powers that ruled the world (from emperors to tycoons) is the history of the first alternative.

And alongside that well-known history (a history which Marx and Lenin falsely identified with the history of religion) is the little-known story of dissident groups which embraced the second alternative and were suppressed in blood by the church at the behest of the state and by the state at the behest of the church.

That this story is little known is not strange, for it was as important to their enemies to obliterate or smear their record as to annihilate the groups themselves. And there were sections of Europe whose "heretical" populations had been so thoroughly exterminated, man, woman and infant, that they had to be resettled from distant parts.

We shall never learn this story from those involved. Their lips were silenced in the flames of a million martyrdoms. Almost none of what they wrote (and they wrote little) has been preserved. Only from their enemies do we learn of them. Yet from this source, interpreted properly, we may learn much. It is a task for the new historian who will be free to unravel this glorious story, so important as a background to what is unfolding today. Karl Kautsky must be thanked for making a start in this direction. But the men who will do it best will be those who share the inwardness of the mystical drive of these so-called heretical communists. If communism was heretical then so was the New Testament. It was from that source that the earlier passive non-political communism sprang, and from the same source came the

Taborites, the Enthusiasts of Zwuickau, Hussite and Waldensian communism, the Baptist communism of Moravia, and other such movements.

There is a persistent tradition that in various remote parts of Christendom, sometimes difficult of access, as in certain Swiss valleys, the official church was paralleled by house-gatherings, democratically organized on the New Testament model as pictured in Paul's letters (the earliest description of them) and in the Book of Acts. The more one studies this model the more striking appears the contrast between its simplicity and its complete democracy and the rigid authoritarian hierarchy which came later to be called the Christian Church. And it would be strange if this early model should not have continued to exert a magnetic force on all who had access (even indirect) to the writings of the apostles.

If the variously sponsored state and business anti-communist committees are to successfully root out communist writings and teachings from the folk literature of America they will have to blacklist the Bible. For it is in the Bible that communism grows. It is in the Bible that democracy grows. It is in the Bible that all the stirrings and yeastings of human nature are fostered.

It has been a full-time job for the Church of the Status Quo to head back these biblical fires, to water them down and disperse them.

The marxist revolutions are biblical in their inspiration and motivation. And it has been a tragic circumstance that Marx and Engels set the tone for the denunciation of religion that characterizes the revolutionary writings of this period.

The Bible is the Bible only because it answers the deepest needs of men. It is men who make it the Bible, just as it was men who wrote it. It contains the true North of man, the needle of whose aspirations swing ever to it. Whenever a man comes along whose life is normal, in the deeper sense of that word, all our abnormalities are tugged at, pulled, nagged at, disturbed by that normality. It is a nagging that never ends, yet needs not raise its voice, which is the voice of man in men.

The Communist Manifesto marched straight out of the deep spiritual insights of Amos and Jesus and Francis.

Insights are seeings, knowings, not knowings about or seeing descriptions of. They are the given, the data, which science takes account of. The science which takes account of religious insights is theology. And just as botany, knowing a thousand thing about a flower, cannot even begin to know (apprehend) this particular flower, so theology is useful in arranging, putting in order, the insights of the prophet, and that is the limit of its usefulness. Yet when, as frequently happens, the theologian becomes the beneficiary of the status quo and that status quo is endangered by the insights of the prophet, the theologian smooths over the prophet's message and sometimes he even suppresses it.

In my hands at this moment, for instance, is a very valuable book, "Studies in Mystical Religion", by Rufus Jones, the Quaker. It shows the development of inward religion from New Testament times to today, from the presence of the Spirit in the koinonia of the Jerusalem Christians to the Divine Light of George Fox. Because of what we owe to Rufus Jones let us make our criticism as gentle as possible.

Let us suppose Jones were writing this book today in Hungary, for instance, or in any of those lands in which it is quite the thing to praise communism. In that case would it not be likely that the writer would paint in the communist features of koinonia with a free brush and in perhaps bright colors?

Living, however, as he did, in a society where the very mention of communism caused rich men to grow suddenly faint, rich men moreover who were his friends, he was extremely careful to gloss over this vital feature of the original form of Christianity. And when he comes to the story of Anabaptist communism he emphasizes the sanity of the "spiritual movement" as represented by Hübmaier and doesn't mention Jakob Huter who initiated the Moravian experiment which shines forth like a bright light out of the darkness of feudalism.

We change, but slowly:

There is much talk recently about the possibility that Christianity may after all be able to exist in the so-called communist, really pre-communist, countries. Thus the myth has been reluctantly abandoned that these countries were all-out persecutors of religion.

The country most responsible for this change is Hungary. The evidence of devoted and passionate Christians like Bereczky, Peter, Ference Kiss, and their people simply cannot be brushed aside. The testimony of the Hungarians at Evanston was so clear that it penetrated and largely dissipated the propaganda of suspicion that had been accumulated against them.

Our church officials are beginning to champ at the Dulles bit and, after many visits behind the "iron curtain", more and more of them are following the Karl Barth lead which calls for a mutually positive attitude between the churches on both sides.

This is all to the good. We should be grateful for it. However, there is something far more important than anything yet exhibited by the ecumenical movement in the works of Christians still to be accomplished. To gain a hint of what that may be we may profitably turn back the pages of history to the 16th century and study those remarkable events which took place in Moravia between the years 1529 and 1622. For here during the greater part of a century flourished about 70 Baptist communes or households in all parts of the country.

Each of these communes had from 400 to 600 persons, the largest had 2000. They were organized on the basis of the stricted communism. Says Kautsky, "Communism in Central Europe at the Time of the Reformation", p. 210, speaking of these people,

"It is certain that they had made a great stride in advance of the guild-crafts of that day towards the manufacture system. They were always careful to stand abreast with their times in technical matters....

"Successful as they were in the handicrafts technically, they were even more so commercially... they were able to surmount the crises of trade more easily that was possible for private producers.

"...from the time of the organization of the Huter communities of Moravia, the complaints on the subject of ruinous competition made by the guild-masters against the communists were never silenced.

"As in the system of their schools, so in their methods of production, the superiority of the Baptists over their opponents was brought most forcibly to light by the complaints of the latter. We recommend this fact to the consideration of all those who maintain that, under no circumstances, can communism be a sound economic principle."

All this finally fell, "not from internal deterioration but through external force." The nobility which protected them was wiped out by the House of Hapsburg, and the Baptist commune disappeared from history and from the history books. There was a good reason for the latter, as historians, in Kautsky's words, "were not actuated by a desire to comprehend socialism, but to collect materials which seemed useful for its condemnation. For such a purpose the Moravian Anabaptists were but

poorly qualified. The Anabaptist insurrection in Münster appeared much more suited to this design. Hence it is this insurrection which is set forth in the usual books of history as the embodiment of the Anabaptist character. It was referred to by preference when historians wished to point out what horrors communism of necessity involved."

Upon close inspection the "cruelty" of the Anabaptists "vanishes like vapour." "Far from being exceptionally cruel, they show themselves to have been unusually lenient for their time, and in view of their peculiar situation. Their cruelty lay in not patiently allowing themselves to be slaughtered--an unpardonable crime of course! Shooting them was a service of love, as Luther said; every shot on their part was an iniquitous brutality."

These attempts to establish "God's Kingdom" on earth, a kingdom whose economy, according to the New Testament Christian tradition, is an economy of "ours", not of "mine" and "thine", were, modern socialists would say, premature. They were premature because they were attempted at a time when the process of production was still largely individual.

According to the Marxian schedule it should have been expected that a Western European country would become socialist before Russia. Yet, prematurely, Russia led the way, and then, even more unexpectedly, China has put her feet firmly on the path to socialism and communism.

Are these not indications that the idea may have had a greater part in social change than was thought by the creators of dialectical materialism? Moreover, is it not quite contrary to the spirit of Marx to push facts into any pattern, even a "marxist" one? Marx was no empiricist but he put his reverence for fact beyond all question and before all theory.

The Baptist communes were facts. Can it not be possible that the human need for brotherhood may produce (may have produced) communist and proto-communist forms in various stages of economic development not ideally suited to them? May it not be a reasonable way of looking at history to consider it a series of departures from the normal line of human development, departures which have always been denounced by prophets and poets calling men back to their truth?

Was not Marx himself one of these prophets, his call to the world proletariat rising to the pitch of true poetry? He spoke in the going terms of his age, at once Cartesian and Hegelian, though he outreached both. His bitter hatred of hypocrisy, his high anger at idealist ethics and at all sentimentalism was godlike in its inner authority, in its true ethics. But his language, being the language of outraged indignation, was frequently exaggerated , and this exaggeration became a pitfall for those "marxists" he feared. We need a new deal on Marx, a fresh study, freeing his message from the metaphysical matrix of his age and giving him his place in the prophetic succession.

At any rate it is correct to report that Marx and Engels stated explicitly that men have not yet begun to make their own history. Yet throughout this pre-human history men have glimpsed their truth and at times have lived it. Even when its issue was inevitable destruction: the Cross, the Battle of Weiss Berg, the fall of Münster, the massacre of the Waldensians. And a thousand others. Should these be forgotten?

No, their story must be remembered, every lost strand of it must be gathered and re-woven, because it throws all the light we have on the constancy of human loyalty to human unity. These martyrs of heretical communism form the historic background for man's impending venture into a one-family world.

This is the answer to our question: what has Christianity to do with Communism? As represented by the primitive Christian "meetings", by the early Franciscans, the poor men of Lyons, the Lollards, the Brethren of the Common Life, the Levellers, the Anabaptists of Moravia, true Christianity is the very father and mother of communism.

It is a great injustice, in denouncing the historic church, to forget those who not only denounced it but suffered torture and death at its hands. And the injustice is not only to the dead and gone but to the living today whose struggle to live a truly normal human life is far from over.

This struggle is indeed just beginning. Each day that brings new triumphs brings new enemies too, enemies within (bureaucratism, parasitism of all kinds, doctrinairism, plain graft and theft, betrayal) and enemies without (the whole last-ditch fight by the beneficiaries of the old system). This struggle calls for every weapon in the arsenal of democracy. To re-write history from the democratic point of view, to wrench the banners of true religion from the bloody hands of those who defile them, this too is part of the struggle.

This is not to dragoon religion into a position secondary or subservient to any system of social or economic or political relationships. The status quo of any form of collectivism will be as subject to criticism as any other status quo, and the spirit of truth, religion, poetry, by its very nature can never rest satisfied with it.

Men have taken (and are about to take) such a gigantic step forward historically that they may be pardoned for feeling big about it and talking as if all history up to now is pre-history. It is important that they should feel very proud. Yet in the light of the long hard historic struggle with its oceans of blood and its mountains of ashes they should feel very humble too.

And while the success and permanence of their move forward depends on their humility (as well as upon their daring) that is not the primary reason they should remain humble. They should remain humble because only in humility can they be human. By humility I mean more than "criticism and self-criticism". I mean even an open-mindedness toward their whole philosophy as expressed in its Hegelian derivation as wll as an open-mindedness toward all specific organizational forms of the collective economy. I do not mean open-mindedness backward into exploitative economics.

Any moves backward of that kind will be precluded by the stern love which is the Driver in this whole march forward.

The stern love which is the essence of Christianity.

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ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN

Returning late at night to my home in Elmsdale, after a day's taxi-ing in Halifax, your editor crashed into the rear of an unlighted truck parked on the right-of-way, destroying his taxi and causing some damage to his head.

For what he hopes will be a short period the New Christian will appear bi-monthly.

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WHAT HAS CHRISTIANITY TO DO WITH COMMUNISM?

THE AMERICAN DECADE

LOVE SEEKS HIS BONDAGE

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